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## Fonthill Nurdles prep for robot challenge



**FRANK IEMAH/  
POSTMEDIA  
NETWORK**  
Iain McFarlane, 12, works on a Lego robot at a Fonthill Nurdles session in Pelham. The group is practising for the First Lego League competition which will take place at Governor Simcoe Secondary School on Saturday. The Nurdles are also collecting used gift cards to repurpose into household items for the competition to raise awareness about PVC plastics in landfills.

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## ■ PELHAM COMMUNITY FOOD DRIVE

# Quarter-century food tradition for Berkhout

ALLAN BENNER  
Postmedia Network

When Gerry Berkhout started the Pelham Community Food Drive in 1991, he had no idea he would still be running the annual event a quarter-century later.

At the time, it was a temporary measure to help the community through a tough time. Things were beginning to slip downhill in Niagara communities in the early 1990s.

People at the time were struggling enough to warrant the launch of programs to help put food on the table for families in need, said the 79-year-old Pelham resident.

Since then, the need has grown, rather than diminished. "In our region, we got hit really hard with the closure of heavy industry," Berkhout said.

"There has been a tremendous change from those years, and there aren't many high-paying jobs left anymore in the peninsula.

"So many people today are depending on minimum wage. You know how it all is, it's a tough time for a lot of people."

In the years since, the annual event now in its 25th year has become a tradition for Berkhout and his family.

"It's close to my heart," he said.

Every year on the first Saturday of December, Berkhout starts the day with a trip into Welland to pick up huge containers of soup from the Blue Star restaurant, as well as snacks from Tim Hortons to feed the throng of volunteers who spend most of the day scouring the neighbourhoods of Pelham for food donations.

"I like doing it and I like helping people," he said.

Before community food drives were started locally, he said area churches ran food banks and asked their congregations for donations.

"If you just depend on churches, there's an awful lot of people that you miss," Berkhout said.

So he launched the door-to-door drive in the hope of gathering as much food as possible to replenish supplies at Pelham Cares.

"If you go door to door, you get everybody."

Berkhout never left out the city street when collecting food donations in Pelham.

In addition to restocking the shelves at Pelham Cares food bank, there is always enough to send to food banks run by Open Arms Mission, Salvation Army and Hope Centre in Welland to help people in that community as well.

"The need in Welland is a lot bigger than the need in Pelham," he said.

Berkhout has had plenty of help running the event.

"Our Lions, Rotarians, Kinsmen, firefighters, boy scouts, church groups — we have so many people that come year after year from all walks of life. We have a lot of individuals, too, and businesses," he said.

"They've been doing it forever."

The event has also become an important family outing for Berkhout, his wife Gwen, their children and grandchildren. "My kids and grandkids, they always do a route," he said. "It's a big thing for them."

One grandchild in particular grew up with the food drive.

Berkhout recalled one drive years ago when his daughter Carol was "very much pregnant."

She was too far along in her

pregnancy to walk from door to door, but it didn't stop her from participating.

The next day, she went into labour and gave birth to her daughter, Christina.

"That's our food drive baby. She's now 14 years old," Berkhout quipped.

"We have our own food drive baby."

The Berkhouts aren't alone in making the campaign a family tradition.

He recalled a young couple who volunteered for the first Pelham Food Drive.

"They've been doing it from Day 1. And now they have their own children who are in university that come home for the day to help the food drive," he said.

What "I'm saying is, it's an important thing for a lot of people. It brings the community together."

"It's a positive thing, and people realize the need of what we're doing."

He added: "It's a good way to start off the Christmas season to do something for someone, not as fortunate as you are. That's what we're saying."

Berkhout has garnered many food memories during his many years running the

## PELHAM FOOD DRIVE

On Saturday, from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., volunteers will be going door-to-door throughout Pelham collecting food donations.

Most needed items include: Canned food such as fruit and vegetables, tuna, salmon, stew, and chili; fruit cups, applesauce, snacks, pudding cups, pudding mixes and Jello, nut-free granola bars, sandwich bags, paper towels, dish soap and laundry detergent, hygiene items including toilet paper, Kleenex, shampoo and conditioner, disposable razors, soap and toothpaste.

event.

"I remember one Saturday morning and the weather was not very good at all," he said.

A longtime volunteer was collecting donations with several children that day, and a senior they met along the way donated more than just non-perishable food.

"They went to someone's house where older people

lived. The lady in the house felt sorry for these kids and the next thing you knew, they came out of the house and they were all wearing these old fashioned galoshes," he said with a laugh.

"A lot of fun things happened. No question about it, the cream of the crop of the citizens came out to help, the people that really care."

Although Berkhout plans to remain involved in food drives into the future, he said this is the last one he will run.

He hopes to find another individual or organization to take charge of future events, to ensure that tradition continues.

"I just want to pass the torch to somebody else. I think it's time for a younger person to carry the torch."

For the time being, though, Berkhout is looking forward to the last food drive under his leadership.

And he's looking for volunteers to help out.

He asked anyone interested in volunteering to contact him at 905-892-8888, or send e-mail to galves@cocego.ca.

allan.benner@postmedia.ca  
Twitter: @abenner1

## ■ HEALTH CARE

# Non-ministry commitment in hospital timeline

ALLAN BENNER  
Postmedia Network

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is making no commitments to the timing of building a new south Niagara hospital in Niagara Falls.

Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati said Tuesday that he believes that construction of the hospital would begin by the end of 2016.

Diodati said his assessment was based on past conversations with Health Minister Eric Hoskins, although the project timelines would need to be announced by the ministry.

But ministry spokesman David Jensen said the timing of the project depends on how quickly the preliminary planning work that is still in its early stages is completed.

"The timelines for implementing the project will depend on the planning parameters established as part of the capital planning process," Jensen wrote in an e-mail, last Wednesday morning. "The ministry is currently working with the hospital and LHIN, and once these parameters have been accepted by the ministry and the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant

Local Health Integration Network, Niagara Health System will proceed to detailed planning of programs and services."

Jensen said the project is still "in the early stages of the capital planning process."

"To date, the project has received government approval to plan and a planning grant of up to \$26.2 million," he said, referring to funding approved

in early 2014.

"Government approval to implement will be required for the project to proceed to design and implementation," he added.

Plans for the hospital, that have been estimated to cost \$800 million, were announced in 2012 as part of the recommendations from the Niagara Health System supervisor Kevin Smith, that also called

for the closure of other hospitals serving south Niagara communities.

The proposed hospital is planned for 12 hectares of serviced land donated in 2013 by the Grassi family, at the intersection of Montrose and Biggar roads on the outskirts of Niagara Falls.

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## First contract ratified by NPCA workers

Postmedia Network

Annual wage increases topping out at 2.25 per cent in the final leg of a four-year contract have been accepted by Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority employees.

Members of OPSEU Local 217 ratified their first collective agreement with NPCA. It was endorsed by 93 per cent of employees who voted.

Monetary improvements include annual wage increases of 1.5 per cent this year, followed in subsequent years by increases of 1.25 per cent, 1.75 per cent and 2.25 per cent.

Local 217 represents Niagara Parks Police and Niagara Parks employees.

Its new NPCA unit, formed in October 2014, represents 30 workers employed in a variety of positions. They include technicians, planners, conservation area field workers and administrative support staff.

"I'm delighted by the resounding vote of

confidence from this new local," OPSEU staff representative Paul Attard said in a union news release.

"It's always encouraging when newly organized workers arrive at a first collective agreement that meets their needs and expectations."

The contract also includes top-ups for pregnancy and parental leave, implementation of a health-care spending account, improvements to eyewear coverage, and standby and call-in language.

The deal also addresses a number of non-monetary items, such as job vacancies, transfers, layoff and recall language, and hours of work.

"It's seldom easy for workers to seek out representation by a union," OPSEU president Warren (Smoke) Thomas said. "These hardworking staff took all the appropriate steps and put their confidence in OPSEU."

The contract expires at the end of 2018.



## Explosives charges laid after Pelham robbery

Two south Niagara men face numerous weapons and explosives charges after a robbery at a Pelham pharmacy, Saturday.

Niagara Regional Police

issued a media release Monday, saying a suspect was quickly arrested following a robbery at the Shoppers Drug Mart on Regional Road 20, at about 5:30 p.m.

Police say a man wearing a disguise approached the pharmacy counter and demanded narcotics from the pharmacist, claiming that he was armed with a weapon, but an investigation by detectives led to the quick arrest of the initial suspect.

Charged with robbery, disguise with intent, possession of a firearm and breach of probation is Brandon Thompson, 27, of Welland.

A second suspect, Tyler Fenton, 27, Port Colborne, was later arrested a result

of further investigation by detectives, the Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit and the Emergency Services Unit as well as the execution of several search warrants.

Fenton was charged with three counts of unauthorized possession of a firearm, two counts of a restricted firearm in a motor vehicle, three firearm storage infractions, possession of explosives, possession of an explosive substance without a lawful reason, two counts of possession of a prohibited weapon, and possession of a controlled substance (Oxycodone) for the purposes of trafficking.

Detectives are continuing to investigate and say additional charges are pending.

## Pelham firefighters kick off toy drive



ALLAN BENNETT/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Pelham firefighters are launching their 26th annual Christmas Toy Drive, asking the community to donate new toys and warm blankets, as well as dog and cat food, to help make Christmas brighter for people in need. Items can be dropped off at fire Station 1, town hall, the Fonthill library branch, CIBC TD Bank, Meridian Credit Union and Royal Bank branches on Dec. 5 to 13, from noon to 4 p.m. on weekends, and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Friday. From left are SPCA agent John Hoadley, retired firefighter John Kiss and his dog Sparky, and Pelham firefighter Vyon Audette.

## Happy Holidays Niagara Peninsula Energy Inc. Holiday Hours



December 23rd - 8:30am to 12:00pm

December 24th - CLOSED

December 25th - CLOSED

December 29th - 8:30am to 4:30pm

December 30th - 8:30am to 12:00pm

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## IN BRIEF

### Niagara Catholic to end year with deficit

Niagara Catholic District School Board will likely dip into its accumulated surplus after incurring a \$1,954-million deficit during 2015.

Its operating budget for the year was \$267 million. The 2015 deficit is a decrease from a \$3.6-million deficit in 2014.

The board's accumulated surplus will slip to \$9.97 million from \$11.9 million. Auditor Mark Palumbi, of Crawford, Smith and Swallow Chartered Accountants, presented the annual audit to the board last Tuesday.

He highlighted the assets and risks in a provincial mandated annual audit pointing out the school board's net debt went up to \$181 million in 2015 from \$177 million in 2014.

The board used an audit committee to work with the auditors.

St. Catharines trustee Kathy Burnink said it made the process much smoother.

### Snowplowing and sanding to cost \$4 million

Each time the snowplows come out, it costs Niagara Catholic \$16,495, while each salting operation carries a \$13.36 bill.

With the first snow of the season on the ground last Tuesday, Niagara Catholic District School Board approved four-year contracts with local plowing and salting companies.

They will do the driveways and parking lots in the boards more than 60 schools.

The \$4-million deal is a 1.55 per cent reduction for snowplowing and an 18.42 per cent saving for salting, said facilities controller Scott Whitwell in his report on the tenders.

St. Catharines trustee Maurice Charbonneau asked for a prediction on the number of snow occurrences but staff would not hazard one.

He hoped no one was singing *Let It Snow*. Companies with the winning bids are: Regional Construction and Griffin Landscaping for work in St. Catharines schools; Steele's Landscaping for Lincoln; Niagara Compost Soil Farm for Welland and Thorold; Griffin Landscaping for Port Colborne; Stevensville Lawn Service for Ridgeway and Fort Erie; and Sacco Construction Ltd. for Niagara Falls schools.

### Short Hills hunt draws to seasonal close

Ontario Parks reported no major issues following Saturday's deer hunt in Short Hills Provincial Park. "It's been similar to past years," said Ontario Parks spokeswoman Melanie Milczynski. "If anything I'd say the hunt was a success, because we didn't have any deer."

The weekend marked the last of three, two-day hunts in the park this year. The hunt was organized by members of the Haudenosaunee Aboriginal community, who have permission to hunt from dawn to dusk on those days.

The park has been closed to the public during the deer harvest, with parks officials and police monitoring the park.

The controversial hunt has drawn protesters to park entrances with opponents, as well as supporters of the hunt. Opponents say the hunt is unsafe and not an appropriate use for the 680-hectare park. Supporters have cited Haudenosaunee treaty rights and say the hunt is conducted ethically and safely by bow-and-arrow, in a park that has recently had a surplus of deer.

Niagara Region sent a letter to the Ministry of Natural Resources in 2014 asking it not to allow future hunts, citing concerns about public safety. Niagara Region has also written letters to Premier Kathleen Wynne and the ministry opposing hunting in the park.

In a previous statement, the ministry said it "recognizes and seeks to balance the interests of the different users of the park" and the rights of the Haudenosaunee to conduct their traditional deer harvest.

The first hunt in the park took place over four days in January 2013.

### ■ CONTEST: Be a Voice addresses housing issues in Niagara

## Teens offer insight into homelessness

MARYANNE FIRTH  
Postmedia Network

Kalley Augerman will never look at a park bench quite the same.

Where most see a place to stop and sit, the 16-year-old now sees what may have been a temporary bed for someone who has fallen on hard times.

While working on her submission for the Be a Voice contest, the Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School student feels her eyes were opened to the homelessness and housing issues plaguing Niagara.

Meant to raise awareness of the struggles people face locally in terms of shelter, the competition included nearly 60 local high school students, who submitted poems, videos, photos and other mediums to express their views. It was hosted by Habitat for Humanity Niagara, Niagara Regional Housing, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, Niagara Prosperity Initiative, Niagara Region and the local school boards.

school boards.

The experience taught Augerman, whose photograph took fourth place in the contest, to never assume Niagara is immune from major issues often associated with larger cities.

"There's a lot more homelessness in Niagara than I thought," said Chantal Prince, whose group entry from DSBN Academy took third place.

"You may not see it, but that doesn't mean it's not there," she said.

"And it could happen to any one of us."

Fellow classmate Soleil LaRoche felt the project taught her "not to turn a blind eye" and to be aware of the problems that exist in the community.

She believes her generation, if properly informed, will be able to incite change and address the issue in time.

A group of students from Notre Dame College School in Welland took the top prize

### BE A VOICE WINNERS

**First place, \$1,000:** Notre Dame College School students Kirsten Alamyank, David Butko, Alex Carullo, Matt Mocha and Chae Porter.

**Second place, \$500:** E.L. Crossley Secondary School students Megan Kanyo, Julia Munro and Morgan Conquerood.

**Third place, \$250:** DSBN Academy students Soleil LaRoche, Lama Rafefi, Naomi

Sapezinskas, Chantel Prince, Katana Brown, Hannah Hamill, CJ Warner, Ally Lawson, Angela Paul and Kerry Benitez.

**Fourth place, \$100:** Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School student Kalley Augerman.

**Fifth place, \$100:** Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School student Rachel Bannerman.

with their video introducing the world to Affordable Housing Month.

The lightweight approach contained a serious message — that everyone deserves to have a safe and affordable roof over their head.

"It's a serious problem in Niagara," co-creator Alex Carullo said.

"Homelessness is something that people know about

but they don't want to face."

Sandy Rempel, family services manager at Habitat Niagara, was impressed with the calibre of entries the contest received in its inaugural year.

"The students really did their research to understand the state our area is in with regards to homelessness and affordable housing and came up with some very creative ideas."

### ■ EDUCATION

## Niagara Catholic embraces broader Culture of Life

WAYNE CAMPBELL  
Special to Postmedia Network

Niagara Catholic is broadening the term "culture of life" beyond a political use.

Stephanie Jarrett, Notre Dame College School chaplain, and Greg Robertson of Saint Paul Catholic Secondary School, last Tuesday reported to the school board on the third annual Culture of Life Conference held RECENTLY at Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre.

Jarrett said Culture of Life philosophy goes back to the early days of the church, in the first century. It relates to the whole life of a person.

"In more recent years the term has been used extensively, often in political arenas, to defend or fight specific life issues such as abortion, euthanasia and stem cell research, with these battles often placing these concerns in very narrow silos," she said.

"When we return to the root of this concept, however, we can see that this philosophy is actually much broader," she said.

"All the elements of Catholic social teaching build the Culture of Life and should be a way of life that weaves through our entire day, a perspective that helps us fight

against abortion but also helps us choose to be kind, fight bullying, and preserve the dignity of every human person."

About 140 students from all eight Niagara Catholic secondary schools attended the conference of speakers and workshops in Niagara Falls.

Alex Schadenberg, executive director of Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, served as keynote speaker.

"End-of-life issues are of great concern in our current political landscape, with developing legislation on doctor assisted suicide and euthanasia," said Jarrett.

Robertson said the idea of

review the approach to Culture of Life came from Debra McCaffrey, the board's chaplaincy leader during their drive back from an anti-abortion demonstration in Ottawa.

Sadly, he said, McCaffrey died in hospital on Nov. 5 while the students were at the conference.

Many students in attendance were able to bring letters from the conference back to their classes, said Jarrett.

"They study these issues in law, religion, sociology, and parenting classes as well as Culture of Life clubs from our secondary schools."

### ■ COMMUNITY

## Pelham fire services answers your questions

MICHELLE ALLENBERG  
Postmedia Network

If you've ever had a burning question you wish would be answered, Pelham Fire Services probably has the answer. The fire department's community messages from the Pelham fire department came about after fire prevention officer Sas-

kia Holditch had received a number of questions.

Holditch said the idea was sparked when someone had asked if there are green lights in some vehicles.

In Pelham some of the volunteer firefighters respond in their personal vehicles and have flashing green lights on

their dash. The light is to alert people so they can make it through traffic quicker. Holditch answered this question for the first community meeting in October.

"What I'd like to see is the public coming out and saying 'oh I have this question' about fire safety or whatever,"

said Holditch.

"I usually preach about the smoke alarms and this and that, and it's like there's more stuff going on that people might be interested about," said Holditch.

Answers to the most recent questions can be found at [www.pelham.ca](http://www.pelham.ca).

■ **HOLIDAYS:** Welland Museum opens door for Christmas

# 'Old-school' Santa coming to the museum

FRANKI INEMAN  
Postmedia Network

Welland Museum is inviting people to get into the Christmas spirit at its annual open house.

The Christmas-themed event will run Saturday, Dec. 5, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. "Christmas open house is something that we do annually here," said Liz Simpson, visitor and marketing co-ordinator at the museum. "We try to make it a free family day for people to come in and experience the museum and get in the spirit of Christmas."

Simpson said there will be crafts, holiday treats and warm beverages, as well as the museum's regular exhibits for people to take in and enjoy.

The gift shop, she said, will be avail-

able for any last-minute holiday shopping.

"The gift shop, too, is pretty much exclusive to the 'It's All Welland Good' shirts. We're one of very few places that people can find those around town," she said.

The open house will have a special guest.

"The new exciting thing we have this year is we have Santa coming," Simpson said. "When you imagine old-school Santa, here's our old-school Santa."

Simpson said Santa will be at the museum from noon to 2 p.m. Photos with the jolly old man are \$5.

Simpson said the Christmas open house tends to be the busiest time of the year.

"It's a great chance, too, for anyone who hasn't been in since our reopening in May to come in and explore and see what's changed," she said.

Visitors are asked to bring a non-perishable food item to be donated to a local organization.



FRANKI INEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Visitor and marketing co-ordinator Liz Simpson, left, and Niagara Women's Enterprise co-op worker Cindy Moores.

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## Shipwrecks – Hattie Hutt

SKIP GILLHAM  
For Postmedia Network

**H**attie Hutt was a three-masted schooner that sailed in the vigorous Great

Lakes trades for more than a half-century.

The 38.62-metre-long vessel was built at Saugatuck, Mich., and completed in 1873. It went to work in the lumber trade as the *F.B. Stockbridge* and could

carry 300,000 board feet from the northern lumber docks to the growing cities down the lakes.

The ship was sold and renamed *Hattie Hutt* in 1881 and came to Canada for

Granville of Chatham, in 1908.

For the final years, *Hattie Hutt* operated in the Lake Ontario coal trade bringing cargoes from New York ports to Kingston. This work continued through the 1926 season. The ship was then laid up and eventually abandoned

in the inner harbour at Kingston.

The hull was stripped of anything useful during the Depression and what remained settled on the bottom. *Hattie Hutt* was pumped out in 1937, towed to deep water off Nine Mile Point, eastern Lake Ontario, and allowed to sink.

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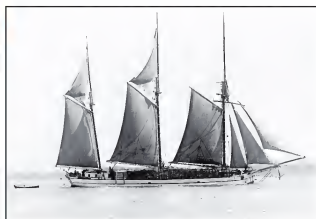
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Hattie Hutt is pictured on the St. Clair River in this undated photo by Louis Pessha courtesy of Bill Moran.

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Tuesday, December 8	7:00 – 8:00 pm
Wednesday, December 9	7:30 – 8:30 pm
Thursday, December 10	10:00-11:00 am

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Deadline: Saturday, December 5, 2015  
Nomination forms are available at pelham.ca and at Pelham Town Hall

Public Skating	Adult Public Skating	Adult/ Preschool	Men's Skinny Hockey	Women's Skinny Hockey	Women's Learn to Play Hockey	Pelham Panthers Home Games
Sunday, Dec 6 1:00-2:20 pm Tuesday, Dec 8 7:30-8:30 pm Friday, Dec 11 3:30-4:30 pm	Thursday, Dec 10 1:00-2:00 pm	Tuesday, Dec 8 1:00-2:00 pm Friday, Dec 11 10:00-11:00 am	Tuesday, Dec 8 8:00-9:00 am Friday, Dec 11 9:00-10:00 am	Monday, Dec 7 9:30-10:45 am Thursday, Dec 10 10:30-11:45 am	Thursday, Dec 10 9:30-10:30 am Hockey Skills Hour Monday, Dec 7 11:00-12:00 pm Thursday, Dec 10 2:00-3:00 pm	Friday, Dec 4 7:30 pm vs. Thorold Friday, Dec 11 7:30 pm vs. Fort Erie



## CHRISTMAS IN PELHAM (November 4, 2015 – January 3, 2016)



**Get ready for the holidays! Check out these great upcoming events around Town and watch for more next week!**  
**December 4 (4pm to 10pm):** Outdoor Christmas Market - Under the Fonthill Arches (20 Pelham Town Square, Fonthill)  
**December 4 (13pm):** Fonthill Volunteer Firefighters' Association Toy Drive - Fire Station #1 (177 Highway #20 West, Fonthill)  
**December 4 (7:30pm):** Fenwick Volunteer Firefighters' Association Turkey Raffle - Fire Station #2 (766 Welland Rd, Fenwick)  
**December 4 (7:30pm):** Wassali Party - Fenwick United Church  
**December 5 (9:30am to 1pm):** Pelham Community Food Drive, Benefitting Pelham Cares  
**December 5 (8pm):** Fonthill Lions Turkey Raffle & Chili Challenge - Fonthill Lions Hall  
**December 8 (6:30pm to 8:30pm):** Fonthill Kinsmen Seniors' Dinner - Old Pelham Town Hall (591 Canboro Rd, Ridgeville)  
**December 10 (9am to 10:30am):** Nordic Walking with Santa Claus - Peace Park

### Outdoor Christmas Market

Friday, December 4, 2015  
4:00pm - 10:00pm  
Under the Arches  
(20 Pelham Town Square, Fonthill)



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### SantaClaus Parade

Pelham's 5th Annual Santa Claus Parade  
Saturday, December 19, 2015

Parade begins at 1:00 pm at Bethany Christian Reformed Church, 1055 Balfour Street, Fenwick, and travels through Fenwick to Centennial Park.

### Letters to Santa

Drop off your letter to Santa at the Santa Claus mailbox located at the intersection of Highway 20 and Highway 10 in Fenwick.

**Community Day in the Park**  
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### Christmas in Pelham FONTHILL VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION TOY DRIVE

December 4-13  
Pelham Fire Station #1  
(177 Highway #20 West, Fonthill)

Visit pelham.ca for details!

### Christmas in Pelham FENWICK VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION TURKEY RAFFLE

December 4 7:30pm  
Pelham Fire Station #2  
(766 Welland Road, Fenwick)

Visit pelham.ca for details!

■ **NIAGARA REGION:** Budget review committee to consider \$1-million request

# New paramedic hires requested by EMS

**MARYANNE FIRTH**  
Postmedia Network

In response to increasing call volumes, Niagara EMS wants to hire an additional 20 full-time employees to the tune of more than \$1 million.

The request was one of 30 items on the regional budget review committee agenda being considered for 2016 funding. Those items, to be chosen by council, were recommended to be paid for using \$6.1 million in available growth assessment and provincial uploading dollars.

The operating budget, which was the focus of the meeting, was brought forward by staff with no increase for 2016.

Niagara EMS has requested two additional 24-hour ambu-

lance crews with a total 16 paramedics be hired, along with two logistics and planning staff, and two operations supervisors.

In 2014, regional council approved the addition of two 24-hour ambulance crews, which were implemented by November of that year.

Those additional resources stopped further erosion of response targets and have since improved response times marginally, a staff report presented to council said.

But call volumes continue to rise, creating further strain, EMS chief Kevin Smith said.

"In 2014, we talked about how increased call volume is affecting our resources and that continues today."

The service, which is co-

funded by Niagara Region and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, saw a 5.8 per cent increase in calls in 2014, followed by a 6.7 per cent increase between November 2014 and May 2015.

EMS staffing is based primarily on demand. During peak hours, there are 30 ambulances ready to go across the region. At night, that drops to 17.

The cost to hire the 20 employees is pegged at \$1,064,729.

"I feel we're rushing things too much here," Niagara Falls Coun. Bob Gale said. Instead of approving or defeating the hires, he hoped to see an external study conducted on the service's operations in 2016.

He felt waiting for the study to be completed at a cost of upward of \$200,000, would not compromise service levels and would provide a better picture of what EMS needs to function more efficiently.

A comprehensive review of EMS was last conducted in 2003-04, Smith said.

Niagara Falls Coun. Bart Maves supported the idea of conducting a review before making any commitments.

In addition to the 2014 and current requests for new hires, a look at the service's 10-year capital plan reveals millions of dollars earmarked for new EMS stations over the next three or four years, he said.

"I'm starting to get a little nervous about the way we're spending money within the

EMS," he said, adding "external assistance" may provide more comfort to council when determining whether to move forward with the capital plan and new positions.

Fort Erie Coun. Sandy Annunziata agreed with Gale that the issue warranted more council discussion.

"The people we're trying to safeguard through the budget process are the same people who would rely on the very efficient ambulance service," he said, stressing the importance of dealing with the hiring request appropriately.

"We will never do it justice by giving this small amount of time to it," he said, expressing his desire to see the item deferred to a future budget meeting to allow for more in-

depth discussion.

That referral motion was later made by West Lincoln Mayor Doug Joyner and approved.

St. Catharines Coun. Tim Rigby said there have been extensive discussions on the topic during public health and social services committee.

"There was time to be dealing with this before," he said, adding he felt "fannyed" that some councillors claimed they haven't had enough time to deal with the issue.

"Attend the meetings, listen to them or read the minutes," he said, adding most items on the budget agenda had been discussed previously.

Council will next meet to discuss the budget on Dec. 3 at 1 p.m.

■ **PUBLIC HEALTH**

## Niagara vaccination rates climb

**MARYANNE FIRTH**  
Postmedia Network

Vaccination rates in Niagara climbed substantially in 2015 after an extensive review conducted by

public health.

The findings were presented in a report to Niagara Region's public health and social services committee.

"The vaccination review is extremely effective, which is why we do it," medical officer of health Dr. Valerie Jaeger said following the meeting.

As a result of the initiative, many of Niagara's immunization numbers are now "in the area where we feel we have community immunity, which is our public health goal," she said.

The annual review, conducted manually by public health staff, included the immunization records of more than 62,000 students from across Niagara. Of those records, more than 14,000 were found to be incomplete.

Those numbers were due in part to legislation changes in July 2014 that added a meningitis, whooping cough and chickenpox vaccines to the list required for school attendance, said Angela Alfieri-Maiolo, manager of the region's vaccine preventable disease program.

As a result of the legislative changes and the inability to conduct a review in 2014, the 2015 review was one of the largest campaigns undertaken by public health.

First notices requesting that records be updated were sent to households in January.

To assist families in getting children up to date, immunization clinics were held at all area high schools, various public health offices and in a number of community locations.

Those who did not comply or make contact with public health were issued a second notice in April, warning of possible suspension from school the following month if records were not updated. Suspensions for incomplete records can last a maximum of 20 days, but students are permitted to return to school once records are updated.

On May 12, 1,674 Niagara students were formally suspended.

That number dropped considerably to 700, by Day 2.

At the end of the maximum 20-day stretch, only 16 names remained on the list. Those children remain in public health system as having records that are not up to date, Jaeger said. If there was an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease, those children would be removed from affected schools.

The review offers an additional opportunity for public health nurses to discuss with parents any concerns they may have regarding vaccination.

"Sometimes we address the concerns and the questions are answered, but even after that parents do have the right to sign a conscientious objection," she said.

"The rates of that are about two per cent." Public health nurses also noted that "schools are safe and they work," Jaeger said.

"From a personal standpoint, I had measles. My children had the shot. The shot is better."

Jaeger used the local measles outbreak in February as an example of the effectiveness of community vaccination.

"It started in a closely-knit group of five initial cases, but we didn't have any spread," she said, while stressing that measles are highly contagious.

"That would not have happened if we hadn't already gotten about a 95 per cent coverage rate for measles."

Prevention only works ahead of time, Jaeger said, which is why vaccinations for a variety of diseases are required even when "there's no visible threat on the horizon."

"It's probably our single most effective public health intervention that we do and it is one of the few health interventions that is cost-saving to the health-care system."

When the review was underway, public health often finds students have been vaccinated, but the organization has not been notified.

Many parents think records are automatically updated through family doctors, but that is not the case, Alfieri-Maiolo said. She urged people to report any vaccinations changes directly to public health.

For busy parents who may have had the booster updates slip their mind, the review acts as a reminder to get up to date.

Jaeger called it "absolutely crucial" for public health to be aware of who is vaccinated and who is not, so the appropriate students can be removed from school should an outbreak occur.



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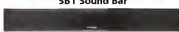
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**Saturday, December 5th, 2015**

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# You MIGHT not know what you think you know

GRANT LAFLECHE  
Postmedia Network

There is no other way to put this. I was humbled by a bicycle. Not that this was an ordinary bicycle. As an experimenter, Brock University professor Robert McGary had the steering reversed. A couple of gears attached to the front of the bike means right is left, and left is right. But I knew this when I got on it. The instructions were absurdly simple and, ultimately, utterly unhelpful. I couldn't ride it. At all. The reversed steering bike McGary put together is an object lesson about how what we think know, and what we think we can do with that knowledge we actually don't. "We lie to ourselves all the time," said McGary, an associate professor of education at Brock. "I'm not talking about herding things, but rather little things about what we think we know and how we manage the world around us every day." I suggested McGary name his evil contraption "Socrates". In Greek literature, the street philosopher Socrates was famous — and hated — for his particular method of questioning people. To have a

conversation with him was to be led down a garden path where, when you got to the end of it, you discover you actually have no idea what you are talking about.

I certainly had that feeling of total ignorance when attempting to ride McGary's bike. I know how to ride a bicycle. Sure, I thought, adapting to the flipped steering might be a bit of challenge, but a manageable one.

Not so much, as it turned out. The bike, which McGary assembled after watching online videos of similar experiments, is a useful tool to examine how adults learn, he says.

"Part of the point here is that correct information is not teaching, and understanding that information is not learning," McGary says.

More than 200 people have attempted to ride the bike so far. Even how has managed to peddle more than a few feet.

Not when the backwards steering is explicitly explained, people still couldn't ride Socrates.

"Some people get very frustrated. Some accused me of doing a trick," McGary says. "Others came to it with strategies about how they will ride it. But so far it hasn't helped anyone."

I cooked up my own strategies before I saddled up. Other than it being way too

small — making me feel a bit like a circus bear riding a tricycle — there was nothing overly weird about the bike.

My basic plan was to drive in a straight line and when I had to correct the path of the bike, I would just turn the handles away from the way I wanted to go.

Simple right? As far as plans go, it worked about as well as a submarine made out of bread. I never managed a full rotation of the pedals and travelled less than a metre.

Beyond the obvious difficulty of doing something counter to what your brain and muscles have been trained over time to do, the common sense rationale as to why adults have such difficulty riding the bike is that the older we get, the harder it is to learn something new.

McGary says the science tells us that isn't exactly true. The brain is more adaptable than previously believed. There is a YouTube video of man who learned to ride a backwards bike in about eight months. McGary says, and the man's son learned in about three weeks.

But that doesn't necessarily prove kids brains are more adaptable.

"The guy was giving his son some powerful motivations. He said the kid could come with him to Australia if he learned to ride it," he says.

In other words, if McGary offered you \$1,000 to learn to ride Socrates, you might do something better than someone doesn't out of idle curiosity.

## BOOKS

# Woman chronicles grandmother's war experiences

JULIE JOCSAK  
Postmedia Network

It started as a personal mission to document her family history.

Two years later, Lesia Chytra has a self-published book for sale on Amazon, called *Torn*.

"I had been curious about my own family history. I live in Toronto now, but the Ukrainian community in St. Catharines is quite strong and I find that a lot of the Ukrainians in St. Catharines have a very similar story," Chytra said.

"They all basically landed in St. Catharines after World War II, coming from displaced persons camps, either in Austria or Germany. I grew up hearing people talk around the tables, how they had been in the camps."

Chytra and her father decided to do what they could to document her paternal grandmother's memories before they slipped away with her increasing dementia. The three sat down for an interview each time Chytra came back to St. Catharines.

"I'm naturally interested in history and my own family history so in 2013 my father and I decided that

we should sit down and get some of the family history written down formally. We sat my father's mother down and asked her about her life which she had always been really open about in a series of interviews," said Chytra.

Chytra turned those interviews into a story that spans three generations. Set during the Second World War, the story follows the main character, Taysa, based on her grandmother, through her experiences during the war.

"For major events before 1941 I tried to stick closely to that, but then after 1948, it's too close to my current family so I made it something completely different," said Chytra.

Chytra is an accounting teacher at Holy Name of Mary Catholic Secondary School in Brampton. She currently lives in Toronto but was raised in St. Catharines, attending Laura Secord Secondary School and then completing her undergrad in business administration and getting a bachelor of education from Brock University before earning a master's of education from University of Toronto.

"This book marks her first writing venture. Beginning with no writing experience, Chytra would sign herself up for writing workshops whenever her schedule allowed. It was there that she met a writing partner, Dave Moores, who helped guide her through the process.

"He's really the reason I published the book," said Chytra.

He was able to help her think out loud and show her how to put it on a page,

showing her what works and how to make a story flow.

For Chytra, the research and community connections were among her favourite parts of the process.

"I loved the research aspect of it," said Chytra. "For example, something small like, what kind of toilet paper did they use in Germany during the war. You project your own experiences onto it. In one part of the book, she is carrying a stack toilet paper so I had to figure out, 'What did toilet paper look like in Germany?' Did it come on a roll like we use today? As it turned out, it came in a stack."

Chytra also found connecting what her grandmother's war experiences to her own life as a 15-year-old girl to actual events fascinating. "She knew when she had been taken from her village, she knew she had been at a factory for a few months, and then she knew that there was a lot of bombing that happened," Chytra said. "I was able to figure out that, yes, the Allies had bombed Düsseldorf, it was quite devastated in September 1942. So I was able to take what she remembered and connect it to history which is really accessible now for us to read about."

Chytra speaks fondly of the two-year project. "I really enjoyed the actual writing process. I found I got really lost in it. It was hard to get going but once I did, it was easily lost myself for two hours." "This is so much more than I would have ever hoped that it would turn in to."

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# LOCAL NEWS

## THEATRE

# Mary Poppins swoops into convention centre

JOHN LAW

PostmediaNetwork

The world's most famous nanny is heading to Scotiabank Convention Centre.

For its annual December musical, Linus Hand Productions is busting out the flying umbrellas for *Mary Poppins*, which producer Hand calls his biggest production since *Beauty and the Beast* eight years ago. With its mix of professional actors and students from Hand's Niagara Falls drama academy, there will be upwards of 60 people on stage.

It's also the most expensive show he has ever secured the rights to. The stage version of the Disney classic was acquired by legendary producer Cameron McIntosh (*Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables*) in 1993, and its brand name doesn't come cheap.

"It's a monster," says Hand. "(But) it's as friendly to audiences as any play out

**WHAT:** Mary Poppins

**WHERE:** Scotiabank Convention Centre, 6815 Stanley Ave., Niagara Falls

**WHEN:** Dec. 4 to 12

**TICKETS:** Start at \$25 for locals, 905-537-7008 or [BoxOffice@falsconventions.com](http://BoxOffice@falsconventions.com)

there. What I mean by that is, it reaches all age groups."

The show uses elements from both the 1964 Disney film and the P.L. Travers books it was based on, and while some things have been removed, there's one aspect you can still bank on: Mary will fly. So will Bert. It's adding to the workload of an already massive show for director Roxanne Rees.

"That requires more attention," she says. "For safety, and making sure the choreography works with the music. There's also all of the magic tricks — you

need that illusion. Mary's got magic, and I've got non-magicians trying to figure out what the tricks are."

The show stars Karin Johnson as Mary and Gavin Bowerman as Bert, along with Kendra Williams (Mrs. Banks) and Preston Vendramin (Mr. Banks). It's at the convention

centre for six shows starting Dec. 4. "Everybody's waiting for Julie Andrews," says Rees. "Everybody has grown up with those wonderful songs — *A Spoonful of Sugar*, *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* — so it's very important to find the right person. That has that charismatic attitude, the gestures,

the posture, that the audience can attach to."

Rees has previously directed *Into the Woods* and *Hairspray* for Linus Hand Productions, and was technical director for last December's production of *The Wizard of Oz*.

[john.law@sunmedia.ca](mailto:john.law@sunmedia.ca)



JEFFREY REES/  
PHOTO

Karin Johnson stars as Mary Poppins in a new production of the classic opening at Scotiabank Convention Centre Dec. 4.



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## IN BRIEF

### Juno winner Johnny Reid coming to Meridian Centre

Juno Award-winning singer Johnny Reid is on the bill at the Meridian Centre in St. Catharines for Tuesday, March 15. The Garden City is included in his "What Love Is All About" national tour that kicks off Feb. 1.

Reid is joined with recording artist Aaron Goodwin and rock and roll, country soul-singer J. Shiplett — along with an appearance by Cape Breton fiddler and



international performer Natalie MacMaster. Johnny Reid's Tartan Army Fan Club had first access to pre-sale tickets beginning Tuesday via [www.johnnyreid.com](http://www.johnnyreid.com).

Tickets for all shows go on sale to the public Friday and cost \$41.75 to \$76.75 (plus applicable service charges). They are available at [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca) or through charge-by-phone, at 1-855-965-5200.

Reid is also partnering with Plus One on the tour, donating \$1 from each ticket purchased, in participating areas, in support of MusCounts Band Aid Program.

That program helps music classes in schools across Canada put instruments into the hands of children who need them.



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## MUSIC



Jazz singer Emilie-Claire Barlow performs in Welland on Dec. 12. HANDOUT/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

## Jazz singer Barlow to woo Welland audience

Postmedia Network

Juno Award-winning jazz singer Emilie-Claire Barlow has a date with Welland-Port Colborne Concert Association.

Barlow will be performing material from her new album, *On A Clear Day*, when she visits Welland Centennial Secondary School on Saturday, Dec. 12.

Barlow won a Juno for best jazz album in 2014, for *Seule ce Soir*.

The Toronto native will be accompanied by some of Canada's top jazz musicians when she performs songs from her other albums, including *The Beat Goes On*, inspired by popular music of the '60s.

While the concert series once had a waiting list for tickets as long as 700 names, association publicity chair Cheryl Maurice says that list has all but "evaporated".

That means although the 2015-16 series is sold out, there will likely be tickets available for this show, and others, freed up by people unable to attend.

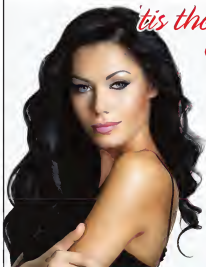
Tickets are generally about \$26 apiece. For ticket availability, call Hilda Belcastro at 905-788-1648.

Barlow's show in Centennial's Dr. J.M. Ennis Auditorium starts 7:30 p.m.

For other upcoming performances in the new year, visit [www.welland-portcolborneconcert.org](http://www.welland-portcolborneconcert.org).

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## MUSIC



HANDOUT / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Husband and wife Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy pack their fiddles for the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre Dec. 5.

# Fiddle is family for MacMaster and Leahy

JOHN LAW  
Postmedia Network

Fiddle great Natalie MacMaster is about to spill the beans about Saturday's Christmas show in St. Catharines when she catches herself and muffs the phone.

"For the Christmas show, do I give away any of that?" she asks Donnell Leahy, her on-stage partner and husband of 12 years. He doesn't take long to answer: No.

"We don't want to give too much away," she says, back on the line. "It's a special Christmas show for us just because we're trying a new concept that we're thrilled about."

Further prodding goes nowhere. Like a mysterious package under the tree, MacMaster says you'll just have to wait.

"I know, ain't that awful? You'll just have to come see. Part of the surprise is seeing the visual... it's just a new concept for Donnell and I for a show. Very fresh, hot off the press!"

That's always been MacMaster's way. For music so steeped in history, she has never shied away from fiddling with expectations. Whether it's injecting blues, rock or jazz into the mix, her albums and concerts are rarely by-the-book affairs. She and Leahy are constantly finding ways to make it more than just a fiddle show.

As Donnell always says, there's certain expectations that people have and we'll always do those," she says. "We'll always give people the parts of us that they expect, we're just putting it in a little different form."

Fans have been expecting a proper collaboration between MacMaster and husband Leahy, who hails from the famed family of Ontario fiddlers, since they got married. They kept waiting until this year's release of *One*, the couple's genre-bending mix of original and traditional music that's unlike anything either has made.

"We made many attempts previously to do (an album), and something always took us away from it," she says. "So we just really committed to it and said, 'Gosh, we have to do this time!'"

"It was kind of hard to get all the peo-

**WHO:** Natalie MacMaster & Donnell Leahy

**WHERE:** FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines

**WHEN:** Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

**TICKETS:** \$55 regular, \$46.75 PAC members; [www.firstontariopac.ca](http://www.firstontariopac.ca)

ple we wanted. It was more than kind of hard, it was next to impossible. But it all worked out in the end."

The long wait produced one huge pay-off: Producer Bob Ezrin. It was only through a series of delays — children, solo tours, Leahy tearing his Achilles tendon — that they crossed paths with the renowned Canadian rock producer, who has guided classic albums by KISS, Alice Cooper and Pink Floyd. He asked MacMaster to play fiddle on a Christmas song he was producing for Johnny Reid. It led to Ezrin calling her later offering to help on MacMaster and Leahy's longesting album.

Most of the record was finished by the time Ezrin went to work, but his contributions were "the polish," says MacMaster.

"He's very inspiring, very creative," she says. "Generally, he just made everything a little slicker. He's just so natural and honest how he hears the music."

The process proved to MacMaster there's always another door to open in a career that's already made her a member of the Order of Canada.

"Every time we play it's new," she says. "Every time there's something else to learn, every time you grow a little more. Every time we evolve a little more."

"It's a creative channel that never closes, and only blossoms the more you enter into it."

As for working with Leahy, MacMaster doesn't get too "analytical" about it. It's a marriage that works on every level, including creatively.

"There's a back and forth there, there's respect," she says. "I look forward to running all my ideas past him, and him for me."

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CHEESE

SAVE  
\$4.00  
5 LB.

CUT FROM CANADA AAA BEEF

**BONELESS  
BEEF STEW**

SAVE  
\$4.00  
LB.

**5<sup>99</sup>**  
LB.

FRESH ONTARIO PORK

**PORK  
TENDERLOIN**

1/2  
PRICE

**3<sup>99</sup>**  
LB.

DARE ULTIMATES  
**COOKIES**  
350g box



1/2  
PRICE

**1<sup>99</sup>**



**Coca-Cola**  
Classic or Diet  
Case of 12

**3/\$10**

3 Case Limit



Sealtest  
**CHOCOLATE  
MILK**  
750ml Carton

1/2  
PRICE

**\$1**

**D'ITALIANO  
BREAD**  
675g Loaf



**2/\$5**

**UNCLE RAY'S  
POTATO CHIPS**  
130/150g Bag



**\$1**

CASHMERE 2-PLY  
**BATHROOM  
TISSUE**  
Plg of 18 Double Rolls



1/2  
PRICE  
**5<sup>99</sup>**  
3 Pkg Limit

TOPPITS COOKED  
**JUMBO SHRIMP**  
21/25 shrimp per lb.



**19<sup>99</sup>**  
680g bag

JANES  
**PREMIUM HADDOCK**  
575g/580g Box



**9<sup>99</sup>**

**ROMAN BRAND  
LASAGNA**  
5 lb tray



SAVE  
\$4.00

**9<sup>99</sup>**

NO.1 GRADE ONTARIO  
**SWEET POTATOES**



**89<sup>99</sup>**  
LB.

NO.1 GRADE ONTARIO  
**CABBAGE**



**1<sup>49</sup>**  
Each  
Limit 5

NO. 1 GRADE ONTARIO  
**WHITE  
POTATOES**  
10 LB BAG



**1<sup>99</sup>**  
3 bag limit



DEL MONTE  
LARGE SIZE  
**PINEAPPLE**

**3<sup>99</sup>**  
Each

FANCY GRADE ONTARIO  
**RED DELICIOUS  
APPLES**



**\$1**  
LB.